Chapter XI

Comprehensive Impact of Mobile Technology on Business

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Abstract

In this chapter we explore the concept of enterprise, or organisational mobility. We examine how mobility in a business can provide a competitive advantage and enhanced sustainability. Potential industry applications for mobile technology are discussed. We delve further by exploring the growth areas of mobile technologies and outline key success factors for the stakeholders in the mobile technology arena. We assess the many opportunities mobile technology brings to various businesses. Furthermore the impacts of mobile technology on organisations and society are evaluated. We then conclude by outlining various competing mobile technologies available to the market both today and in the future.
Introduction

The business need for mobility and real-time connectivity are terms that are being used frequently in the technology industry but often without compelling business applications or concise and agreed-upon definitions. While it is important to note that technology on its own is only a means to an end, the purpose, or business objective, to which the most suitable technology is required has to be developed.

Mobility can enhance productivity, as workers are not constrained to their desk in order to perform everyday business tasks — for example, employees can still work whilst waiting in meeting rooms for a meeting to start. Furthermore, it can also help organisations enhance competitive advantage by allowing the organisation to move toward the concept of real time enterprise (RTE) through real-time data input and quicker decision making regardless of location.

However, despite these benefits, mobility does have its disadvantages, namely blurring the divide between work and non-work life. This is especially evident in the Information Age.

Certain components of the value chain have leaped ahead of other aspects, prohibiting greater uptake of mobile technology. While mobile device manufacturers continue to produce devices at an alarming pace, uptake and adoption has slowed due to factors outside their control. Apart from commercial reasons such as cost, security fears (both real and unfounded) are inhibitors. There are also external factors that can inhibit the movement toward a truly mobile society. The limitations of carrier infrastructure and standardisation issues are just a few. Enablers to greater mobile uptake would be greater applications provided by a single device, with faster connectivity than the traditional GPRS technology.

The Internet has been a blessing in disguise to the apparent and recent surge in the mobile age. Mobile technologies leverage on the strengths of the Internet for services such as data communications and information services. Where will it lead to? What opportunities will it provide to businesses? How will mobile technology impact on daily life? These and other questions will be answered in this chapter.

Mobile Technology

Mobile technology has evolved from the early ’80s. It now includes wired LANs (local area networks), laptops providing a sense of mobility, and computing power in a handbag. In 2003 we saw more and more proliferation of wireless